

# EDUCATION IN THE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE

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Yusuf Alpaydın



This report is the summarized  
version of the main report.

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# EDUCATION IN THE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE

## ABSTRACT

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The first report prepared under the Turkey of the Future project is on education, where our country has long been in a search for stability and methodology. The report aims to realistically study in 2018 what needs to be accomplished when looking forward to 2030 using quantitative and qualitative data. In this context, the study begins by explaining the state of education in the new millennium and the problems experienced from this perspective. The context necessary in resolving the issues and bettering current circumstances has been also emphasized in the purview of the report. Along with these improvements, students' national and international examination performances are also analyzed. Finally, the developed policies, solution recommendations, and improvements have been presented in 12 points on the vision of the future. In preparing the report, the primary framework has been shaped by the relevant scientific literature, the framework and principal values established by the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education within the scope of the Turkey of the Future Project, and the educational perspectives of the research team. Besides multidisciplinary and systems approach, locality and originality have been the two principal values when preparing this report.

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## İLKE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE PROJECT

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*Project coordinator* : Lütfi Sunar

*Publications coordinator* : Muhammed Hüseyin Ergören

*Project team* : M. Mustafa Bilgili, M Gazali Kılınc, Hasan Remzi Eker

*Design* : Seyfullah Bayram

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Adress: Aziz Mahmut Hüdayi District Türbe Kapısı Street. No: 13 Üsküdar / İstanbul Phone: +90 216 532 63 70 E-mail: [getu@ilke.org.tr](mailto:getu@ilke.org.tr) Web: [ilke.org.tr](http://ilke.org.tr)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### Assoc. Prof. Yusuf Alpaydın

Alpaydın completed his BA at the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling at Boğaziçi University in 2003 and his MA in the program of Adult Education at the same university in 2006. He finished his PhD at the İstanbul University Labor Economics program with his thesis on the relations between the higher education system and the labor market in 2013. He worked as a school counselor for 11 years in institutions affiliated with the Ministry of National Education between 2003-2014. During this period, he took part in numerous research and application projects, primarily regarding the curriculum, content development, and formative education projects of the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services Family Education Program (AEP). Since 2014, he has been a faculty member at the Department of Educational Administration under the Department of Educational Sciences.

## ABOUT THE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE PROJECT



Having embraced the necessity of observing and understanding society, of producing analyses that acknowledge social needs, and of conducting studies oriented to social problems since the day of its inception, the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education believes in the importance of conducting studies relevant to humanity as a whole rather than any one particular group of people.

The current state of the deterioration in our intellectual productivity, inefficiency in realizing current potentials, and the expansion of problems building up in all spheres of life, riddled with many a vicious cycle, have reaffirmed the İLKE Foundation's conviction in studies oriented to field-research and problem-solving. To this end, we prepare reports by experts in their fields and provide them to the public in the fields of Education, Higher Education, Administration, Economics, Foreign Policy, Social Policy, Cultural Policy, and Civil Society.



As the İLKE Foundation, we aim to contribute to Turkey's vision for the future by adding the İLKE reports to our studies that promote principles and provide solutions, studies that check the world's pulse while simultaneously being informed by local dynamics. Within the purview of the Turkey of the Future project, we aim to provide guidance to policy-makers by developing coherent, functional, and sustainable strategy and policy recommendations based on data and knowledge in social, economic, cultural, and political spheres.



## Foreword

As the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education, we believe that NGOs and the studies conducted therein are critical for policy-makers, practitioners, and the society. Accordingly, we endeavor to shape our studies so to function as a bridge between decision-makers and society. It is evident that society's level of prosperity will rise when the structures and functions of civilian organizations are better understood and constructed.

As the İLKE Foundation, we attach importance to being an active part of the construction of a strong society with institutions such as İLEM, YEKDER, and İGiAD that are part of our organization and are conducting compelling and leading studies in their fields. In this, we endeavor to keep our finger on the pulse of the civilian sphere while proceeding with the understanding that a deeper comprehension of national issues is necessary. We strive to construct all our studies in a perspective that addresses, first of all, our country and the entire world, for the wind of globalization has left no door unopened and has connected even the most disjointed of things. With this care and understanding, we prepare policy notes and research reports comprising proposals for practical solutions in a variety of fields and present them to the public. While we believe in the importance of the accumulated knowledge of the past, we also believe that the day's circumstances must be analyzed properly as to equip ourselves with a strong vision of the future.

The İLKE Foundation has espoused the mission of preparing our country for the future, under the Turkey of the Future Project, as it has done in other studies. With the Turkey of the Future Project, we study Turkey's fundamental issues on a real basis and by observing the integrity of time and space. Our main effort has consisted of consistently challenging the difficulties encountered when handling the issues comprising the project, treating the problems holistically, and suggesting solutions not only concerning our country but also worldwide. We believe that understanding and communicating problems is an important obligation, for solutions will become possible only when we meet problems head on and understand them holistically. Having said that, we also appreciate the importance of consulting our constructs, methods, and outputs with experts being aware that studies pertaining to the future are open to speculation.

We initiated the "Turkey of the Future Project" in 2018 with this objective. With this project, we want to draw attention to the increasing importance of speaking about the future in an era of constant change. In the purview of the project, we develop medium-term vision proposals for Turkey through research reports in the fields of primary and higher education, economy, governance, foreign policy, social policy, cultural policy, and civil society. In the other part of the project, we provide specific diagnoses and policy suggestions related to the aforementioned fields and their subfields through Policy Notes and Analysis Reports.

We hope that the studies conducted in the purview of the Turkey of the Future Project will illuminate our road ahead in the relevant fields and contribute to the creation of a more sustainable order.

Lütfi Sunar

Chairman of the İLKE Foundation  
Coordinator of the Turkey of the Future Project

## Introduction

Education is one of the foremost fields with high expectations by the public—thus, often an area for complaints. Having from its classical path in the 19th century, transformations continue as fundamental pursuits for education in Turkey persist. Despite these pursuits,

the desired momentum has not been achieved in the field of education. Our current period is one of new pursuits in solving Turkey's educational problems and determining what it wants to achieve in education in the upcoming years. Interpreting Turkey's pursuits over the last 15-20 years is possible through the centralized exam systems (see Figure 1).

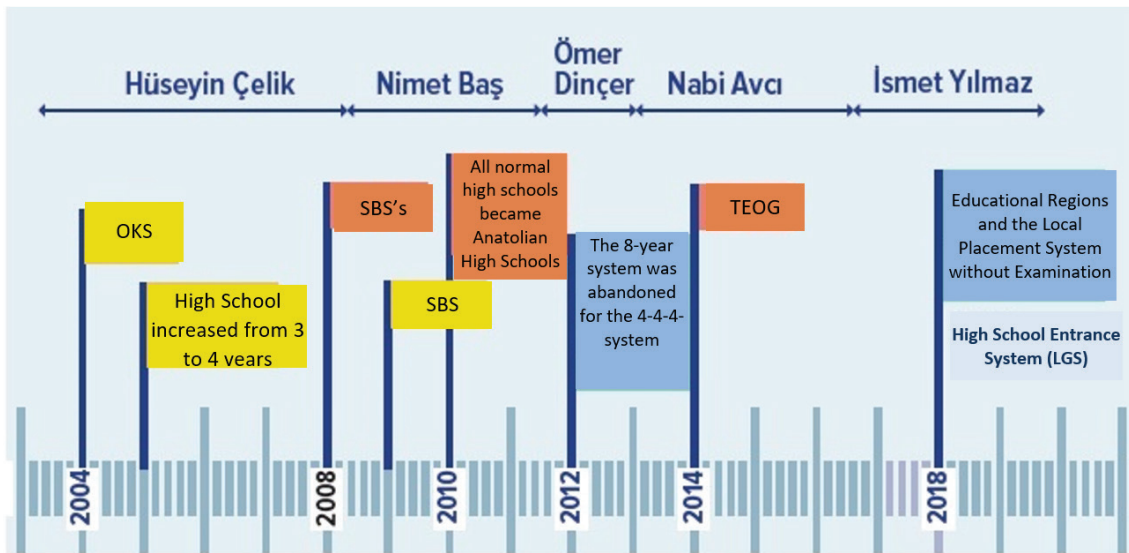


Figure 1. Transformation in the Systems of Progressing to Secondary Education in Turkey after the 2000s

## Evaluating Education Policies

Since the start of the new millennium, the two important pillars of education policies from the perspective of the AK Party governments in power have been quantitative and structural developments in education and reforms aimed at meeting the conservative population’s expectations from the Turkish education system.

### *Quantitative and Structural Developments*

In this context, the first pillar of education policies relates to increasing school attendance rates and solving the problems of schools, classrooms, and teachers. The AK Party governments can be said to have been successful at establishing this infrastructure (see Figure 2). As a matter of fact, more than half of the nearly one million currently employed teachers have been appointed during the AK Party governments’ time.

Along with improving infrastructure conditions, the number of students per classroom

have decreased in elementary and secondary education (see Figure 2). Correspondingly, the number of students per teacher has also decreased in elementary and secondary education (see Figure 3).

### *Removing Ideological Barriers*

The AK Party governments’ education policy has included reforms aimed at meeting Turkish conservatives’ expectations from the Turkish education system. The removal of the coefficient barriers for imam hatip schools and the addition of elective courses on religion are among such reforms.

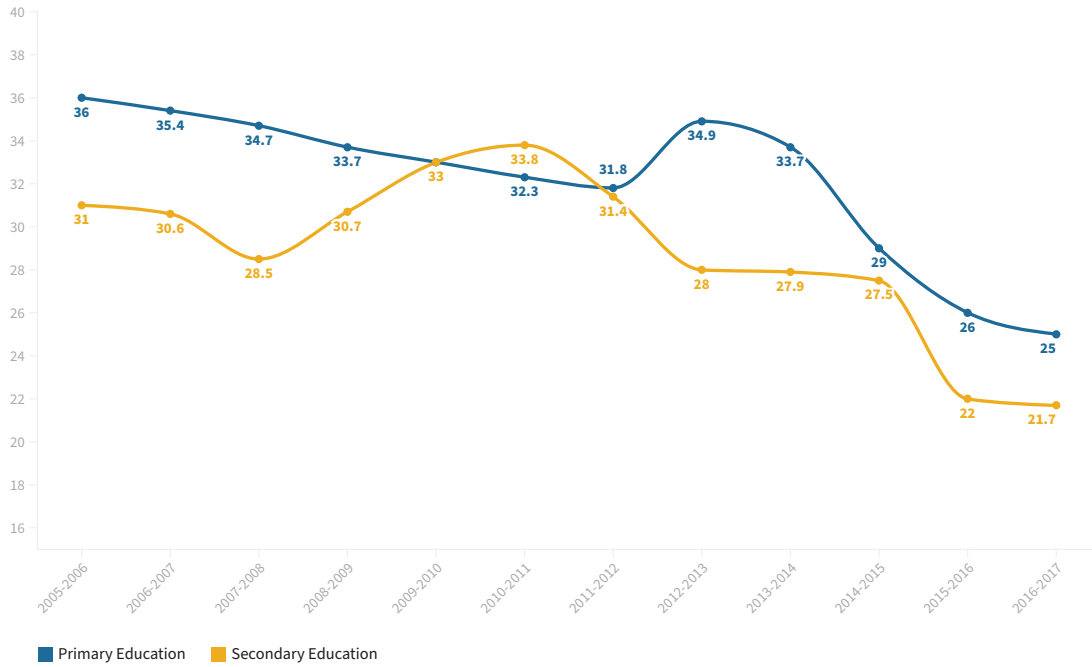
In conclusion, the expected increase in students’ national and international exam performances has not occurred despite the quantitative and structural changes and the removal of ideological barriers, along with the betterments and changes in education. For example, even though a positive development is found in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, Turkey placed 50<sup>th</sup> among 72 countries according to the 2015 data. Furthermore, 75% of students were unable to go on to their school of preference when entering secondary education.

Table 1. Number of Schools, Classrooms, Teachers, and Students according to Levels in the 2016-2017 Academic Year.

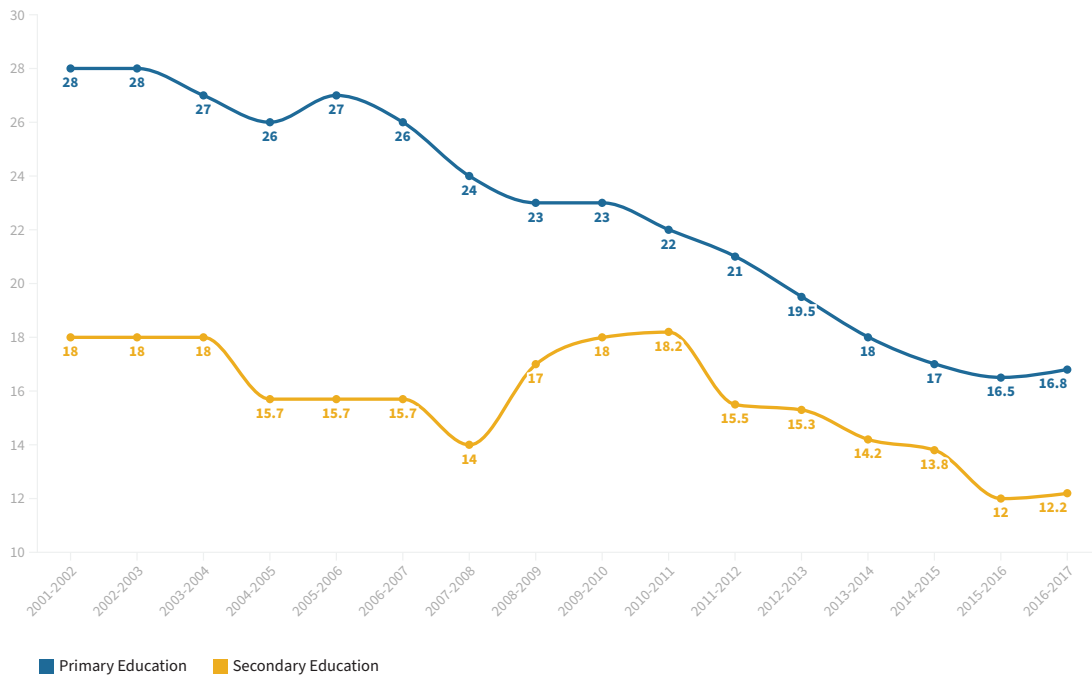
	No. of Schools		No. of Classrooms		No. of Teachers		No. of Students	
	2002	2017	2002**	2017	2002	2017	2002	2017
Preschool	2,750	8,719	13,500	39,277	3,000	38,963	253,513	1,326,123
Elementary	35,052	25,479	300,000	248,270	372,687	292,878	10,477,616	4,972,430
Secondary		17,879		177,136		324,350		5,554,415
High school	6,367	11,076	75,000	189,751	144,884	333,040	2,579,747	5,849,970
Total	44,169	63,153	388,000	654,434	520,571	989,231	13,310,876	17,702,938

Source: MEB Ministry of National Education Statistics, Formal Education, 2016-2017

## EDUCATION IN THE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE



**Figure 2. Number of Students per Classroom in Basic and Secondary Education**  
 Source: Calculated by the author based on the Ministry of National Education [MoNE] Education Statistics).



**Figure 3. Number of students per teacher in primary and secondary education**

Source: Calculated by the author based on the MoNE Education Statistics.

***Chronic Problems in the Education System***

- Inability to procure justice or equality in the education system,
- Disregard for individual differences in education,
- Inability to develop personnel competence or an administration system,
- Insufficient adaptation to systems beyond education such as employment,
- Inability to increase quality and activity,
- Inability to establish an education paradigm appropriate and specific to Turkish people and culture.

***The Economic, Technological, Political, and Sociocultural Context Affecting Education in Turkey and in the World***

This section examines the demands that environmental systems bring about by analyzing their effect on education.

***The Economic and Technological Context***

This part delves into the probable repercussions changes in economy and technology have had on the education system. In other words, the effects of the components of Industry 4.0 (see Figure 4) on education are being observed. Globalization; the knowledge economy; changes in the sectoral

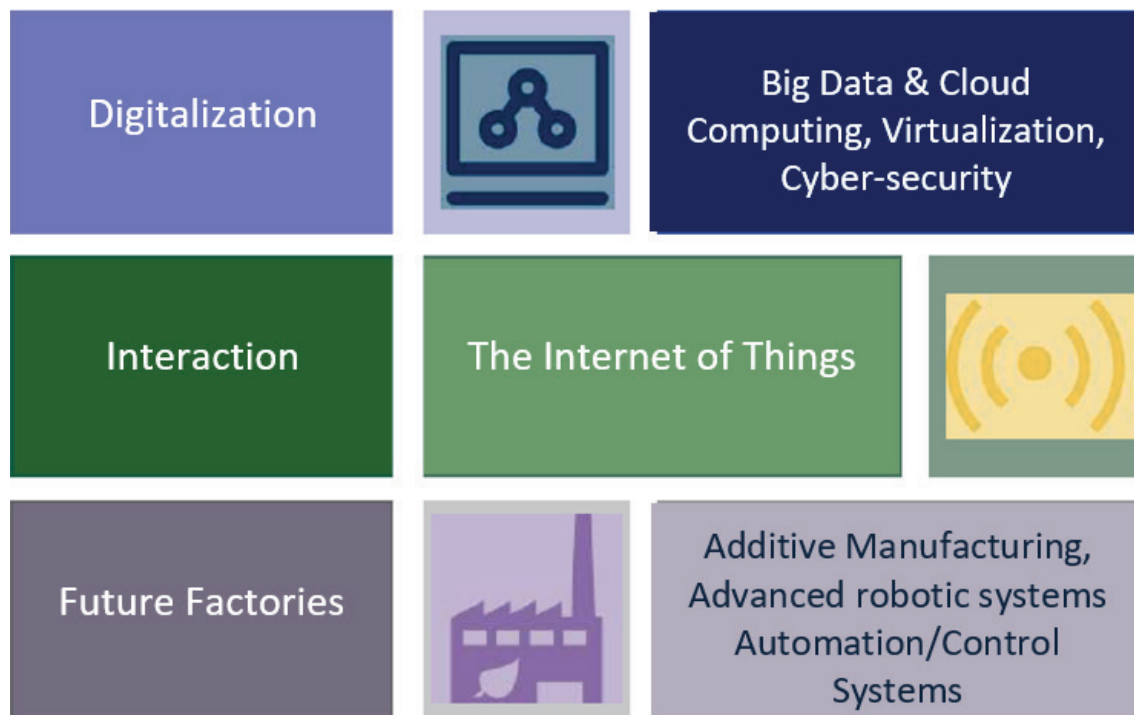


Figure 4. Number of students per teacher in primary and secondary education

Source: Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey [TÜBİTAK], 2016

structure of the economy; the structure of production, information technologies, and labor; and professional developments have resulted in expectations from the Turkish education system such as increased access to education, a higher population of highly educated individuals, knowledge usage, scientific thought, developing research and problem-solving skills, developing foreign language skills, developing personal and social skills, developing aesthetic and artistic skills, and achieving the integration of new technologies into education.

Another environmental variable in education particular to the economic field is related to income distribution (see Figure 5). A positive correlation exists between education levels and the distribution of wealth. For this reason, complimentary public support is important for reducing the effects of the distribution of wealth.

Initiated by MoNE in 2010, the Fatih Project (Movement for Enhancing Opportunities and Improving Technology) aims at providing equal opportunity in education and instruction and improving technology in schools. One of MoNE's mega projects in education technologies is the Educational Informatics Network (EBA). Defined as an online social education platform (Educational Informatics Network, 2016), the Innovation and Education Technologies General Directorate provided this to individuals free of charge.

### *Political Context*

When considering the political context in terms of its influence on education, primary developments such as the formation of multiple centers of power instead of a unipolar world, the increase of inter-governmental codependence, continued political

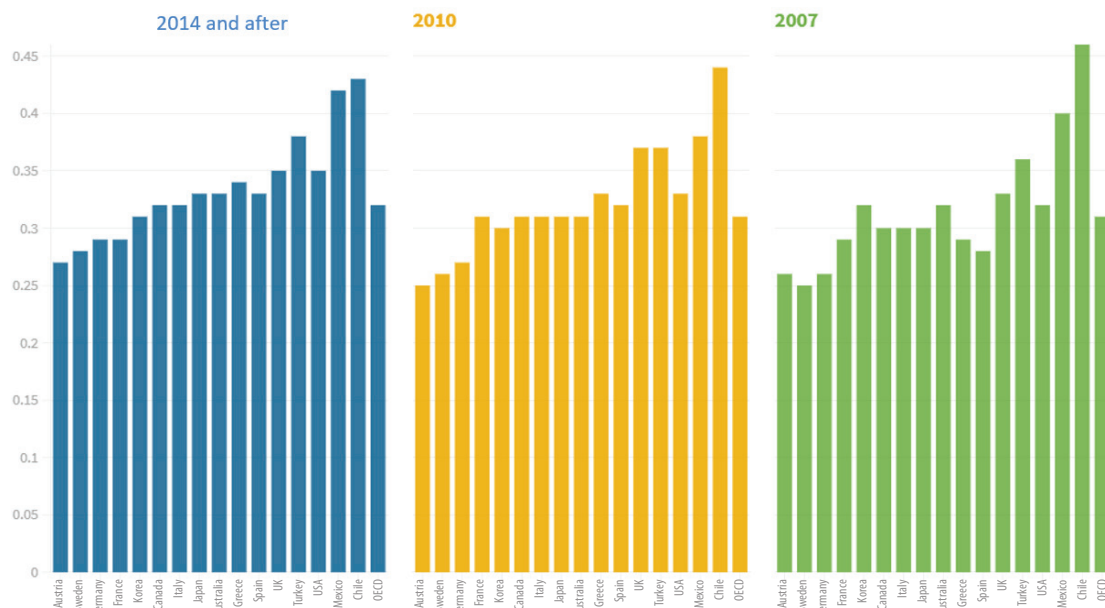


Figure 5. Coefficient of disposable income inequality

Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2014

instability in the Islamic world, cultural-ideological-religious conflicts, and demands for developing the effectiveness of democracy and public administration come to the fore. For such reasons, education must be able to improve acquaintances with cultural differences and tolerance, improve conflict resolution skills, ease access to education services, improve the transition to decentralized models in education, strengthen communication with educational partners, and improve the understanding of transparency and accountability in education.

### *Sociocultural Context*

When considering it socio-culturally, education is influenced in the context of Turkish society by circumstances such as urban areas and urbanizing populations, decreased population growth (see Table 2) and the subsequent aging population, increase of individualization-atomization, cultural interactions and differentiation, transformation and attenuation in family structure (see Figure 6), secularization and conservatism, and the effects of social media on culture.

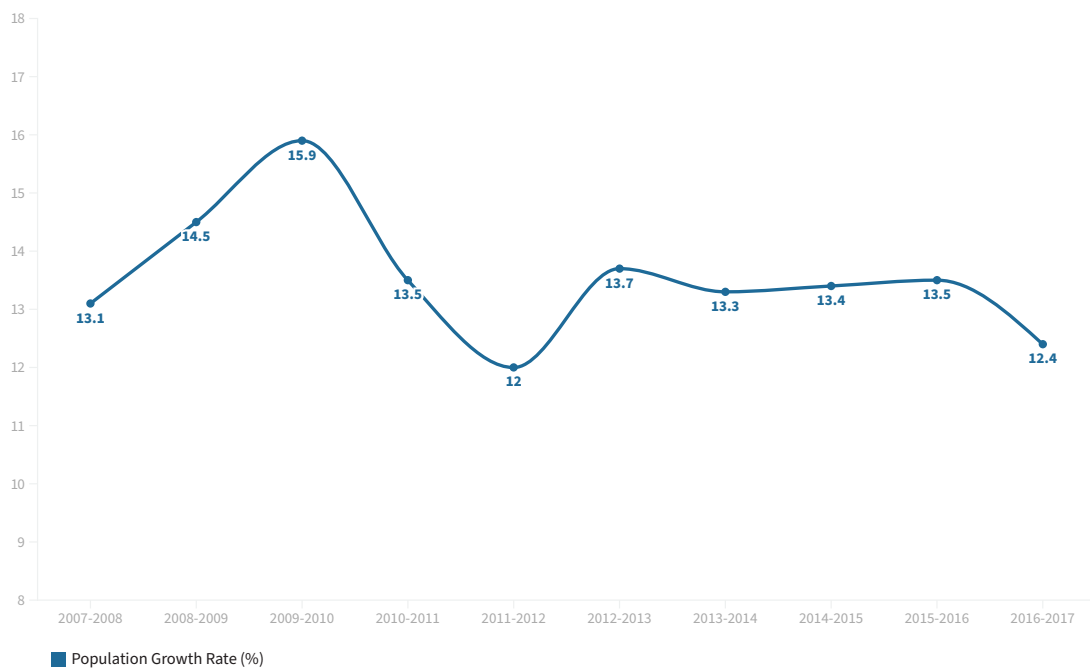


Figure 6. Growth percentages of Turkey's population according to 2017 Data

Source: Created according to the Turkish Statistical Institute's [TURKSTAT] population statistics

Table 2. Percentages for the Various Household Types (2014-2016)

Household Types	2014	2015	2016
Single person household	13.9	14.4	14.9
Nuclear family household	67.4	66.9	66.4
Childless Family	14.1	14.3	14.2
Standard Nuclear Family	45.7	44.8	44.0
Single parent family	7.6	7.8	8.2
Single parent (father) family	1.5	1.6	1.7
Single parent (mother) family	6.1	6.2	6.5
Extended family	16.7	16.5	16.3
Household without a nuclear family	2.1	2.2	2.4

Source: TURKSTAT (2017b)

## The Future of Education in Turkey: Visions in the Fundamental Issues of Education

The main outlines of what needs to be achieved and the policies and strategies that should be followed in the upcoming years have been examined while providing an assessment of what the fundamental problems in education are. The principal vision and policies that have come to the fore in these topics are as follows:

**1. Education Paradigm:** Studies need to be made toward producing an education paradigm that makes use of our society's tradition of knowledge and discourse, its understanding of existence and knowledge, its cultural and humane

reality, and its historical experiences in the field of education.

- 2. Education Programs:** In the program revisions in the upcoming years, the principles of internal consistency, localization in program designs, avoiding impatience, flexibility and diversity, targeting holistic development, simplicity, and an interdisciplinary understanding must be taken into account more in order to elevate our education programs.
- 3. Transitions between Levels and Central Examinations:** Rectifying inequalities between schools, ensuring quality for each school at a fundamental level, and strengthening schools' communication with society must be achieved in order to dispose of exam-centered education.

4. **Guidance and Planning Services:** To develop guidance services, its harmony and completeness with the process of education and its shareholders must be increased; the system for guiding students to later educational levels according to their interests and talents must be operationalized.
5. **Professional and Technical Education:** In addition to regular policies incentivizing qualified students, procuring equipment, participant planning, and coordinating with relevant sectors, more weight should be assigned to work ethic and developing talents in professional education. Furthermore, the focus of solutions should be shifted toward the structure of the economy and firms.
6. **Private Education Institutions:** Besides ameliorating the public's burden for classrooms and teachers, the private sector also has the potential of leading the way for innovative practices in education. To this end, incentive policies for private education institutions in cities with crowded classrooms should continue. Conversely, MoNE should inspect the employment conditions in private institutions and take precautions toward bettering them.
7. **Educating Students with Special Needs:** While an important part of the education system, significant gaps still exist in educational services for students with special needs. In this regard, the number and capacity of private schools that cater to disabled and gifted students must be increased. A proper educational approach and guide must be established regarding the nature of the education for such students. Current and prospective schools must diverge architecturally and equipment-wise from mainstream schools. The effectiveness of Individualized Education Programs (IEP) must be increased by employing sufficient private education personnel, developing educational diagnostics and program preparation processes, setting aside hours for class teachers' in-service education on special education, and creating a clear and simple supervisory system.
8. **Imam Hatip Schools and Religious Instruction:** As an original educational model produced in Turkey, imam hatip schools must be properly and effectively presented to society, and the proportion of students attending Imam Hatip middle and high schools must be increased. The number of elective religious courses should be decreased, the courses should be simplified, the recurrences between these courses and the DKAB (Religious Culture and Ethical Instruction) course should be decreased, they should be presented to the public anew, and taking them as electoral courses should be encouraged.
9. **Adapting to New Technologies in Education:** A new framework regarding what classes and the degree to which new technological instruments will be integrated must be developed without damaging the nature of teacher-student interactions and made into an aim. Rather than simply focusing on capabilities, teacher training should also improve their attitudes toward technology and

correlate their technological competence with the performance system.

**10. Cultivating and Employing Teachers:**

In accepting students to faculties of education, a system must be developed that allows a more comprehensive review of students. In cultivating teachers, cooperation between faculties and schools must be developed with new models. The supply-and-demand projection studies that have lost traction after the 4+4+4 system must be repeated, and the capacities of faculties of education must be reviewed. The processes of public employment for teacher candidates must be conducted in a multidimensional, fair, and transparent manner.

**11. Teacher Development and Performance Administration:**

For the professional development of teachers and a better administration of their performance, a multidimensional performance evaluation and incentive system for not only teachers but also administrators and schools must be established. Every developmental activity teachers do should be brought within the scope of incentives. Evaluation results should also be related to the career system. A System of Teacher Career Steps should be developed and put into practice. The perception that teaching is a career profession must be established.

**12. Administrating the Education System and the School:**

Achieving the aims foreseen by the education system in conditioned upon obtaining a more dynamic, participant, decentralized, and school-centered structure and education leaders who will accomplish this transformation. To this end, the central

administration should limit itself to processes such as developing educational standards, determining the minimal standards regarding curricula, establishing and tracking a quality review system, monitoring and then reporting scientific developments and projecting them to the education system, and procuring equality between regions. A decentralized and school-centered administrative understanding, which is centered upon educational regions and establishes manageable sections, should be preferred. Regional school administrations should be managed with a more professional logic. Administrative and educational affairs should be separated more functionally in these centers.

## Conclusion

This report has primarily examined the overall picture of education since the beginning of the new millennium and the policies developed within its scope. A contextual analysis has been made in order to determine the premises of developing new approaches in education and designating its method. In conclusion, a framework of reference for Turkey's education policies, derived from the findings and resulting perspectives, has been evaluated under 12 topics that are proposed for the next 10-15 years. After this, Turkey's Education Vision has been presented under eight topics to help secure its future. These vision statements must be considered to be interrelated and their success to dependent on each other. Accordingly, the visions should be put into practice as a holistic program.

# EDUCATION

## IN THE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE



### TURKEY'S VISION OF EDUCATION

The Turkish education system must fully achieve the following in order to secure its future.

1

Education must have an understanding born from our education tradition centered on humane competence; an education understanding focused on humane development rather than statism and economics and one that prioritizes developing individuals' talents.

2

Education programs must have historical and intellectual depth; they must have a pedagogy, conceptual scheme, and design shaped by the conception of existence, knowledge, and ethical perfection derived from the profound intellectual accumulation of our social history.

3

Schools must guarantee quality: Schools must meet the standards of quality, alleviate inequality, be architecturally pleasant for students and teachers, and be designed particularly for groups with special needs.

4

School leaders must be meritorious: Education leaders must be focused on school development and highly educated, must have proven themselves in their technical and humane capacities, and must be capable of contributing to all school processes.

5

Faculty must be competent and continuously learning: Teachers must be competent; focused on intellectual and technical development; possess the ethics and spirituality of a leader, role model, master, and professional; and touch the lives of their students.

6

Administration must be decentralized and have a school-centered understanding: The administration must have a dynamic, development-focused understanding based on shareholder participation, must lighten the central administration's burdens, and must achieve the transfer of authority to local education boards and schools.

7

The education system must have a fair performance review and incentive system: An objective system must exist for reviewing performance, one that appreciates educators' efforts and can provide effort-based incentives like proper careers and status.

8

Education institutions must have strong institutional communication: A ministerial organization and schools must be reassuring to the parents, students, and the rest of society; possess clear and strong social communications; and have a culture, tendencies, and strategies that are known and accepted by everyone.

# EDUCATION IN THE TURKEY OF THE FUTURE

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The report aims to realistically study what needs to be accomplished when looking forward to 2030 using quantitative and qualitative data. In this context, the study begins by explaining the state of education in the new millennium and the problems experienced from this perspective. The context necessary in resolving the issues and bettering current circumstances has been also emphasized in the purview of the report. Along with these improvements, students' national and international examination performances are also analyzed. Finally, the developed policies, solution recommendations, and improvements have been presented in 12 points on the vision of the future. In preparing the report, the primary framework has been shaped by the relevant scientific literature, the framework and principal values established by the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education within the scope of the Turkey of the Future Project, and the educational perspectives of the research team.